
At Your Service: The Ten Commandments of Great Customer Service

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Customer service is an integral part of our job and should not be seen as an extension of it.

The Ten Commandments of Customer Service

1. Know who is boss. Part of what you do is service customer needs, and you can only do that if you know what it is your customers want. When you truly listen to your customers, they let you know what they want and how you can provide good service.

2. Be a good listener. Take the time to identify customer needs by asking questions and concentrating on what the customer is really saying. Listen to their words, tone of voice, body language, and most importantly, how they feel. Beware of making assumptions - thinking you intuitively know what the customer wants.

3. Identify and anticipate needs. The more you know your customers, the better you become at anticipating their needs. Communicate regularly so that you are aware of problems or upcoming needs.

4. Make customers feel important and appreciated. Treat them as individuals. People value sincerity. It creates good feeling and trust. Think about ways to generate good feelings about their interaction with you. Customers are very sensitive and know whether or not you really care about them.

5. Help customers understand your systems. Your organization may have the world's best systems for getting things done, but if customers don't understand them, they can get confused, impatient and angry. Take time to explain how your systems work and how they can simplify the process. Be careful that your systems don't reduce the human element of your organization.

6. Appreciate the power of "Yes". Always look for ways to help your customers. Look for ways to make navigating the courts easier. Always do what you say you are going to do.

7. Know how to apologize. When something goes wrong, apologize. It's easy and customers appreciate it. Deal with problems immediately and let customers know what you have done. Value customer complaints. As much as we may dislike it, it gives us an opportunity to improve. Even if customers are having a bad day, go out of your way to make them feel comfortable.

8. Give more than expected. People generally expect a frustrating experience at the court. Help to change that expectation by making their experience more pleasant. Consider the following:

- What can you do to help customers navigate the system easier?
- What can you do to follow-up on problems and assist people?
- How can you provide a positive customer service experience that may be totally unexpected?

9. Get regular feedback. Encourage and welcome suggestions about how you could improve. There are several ways in which you can find out what customers think and feel about your court's services.

- Listen carefully to what they say.
- Check in with them to be sure they understand directions.
- Provide a method that invites constructive criticism, comments and suggestions.

10. Treat coworkers well. Your coworkers are your internal customers and need a regular dose of appreciation. Thank them and find ways to let them know how important they are. Treat your coworkers with respect and chances are they will have a higher regard for customers. Appreciation stems from the top. Treating customers and employees well is equally important.

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